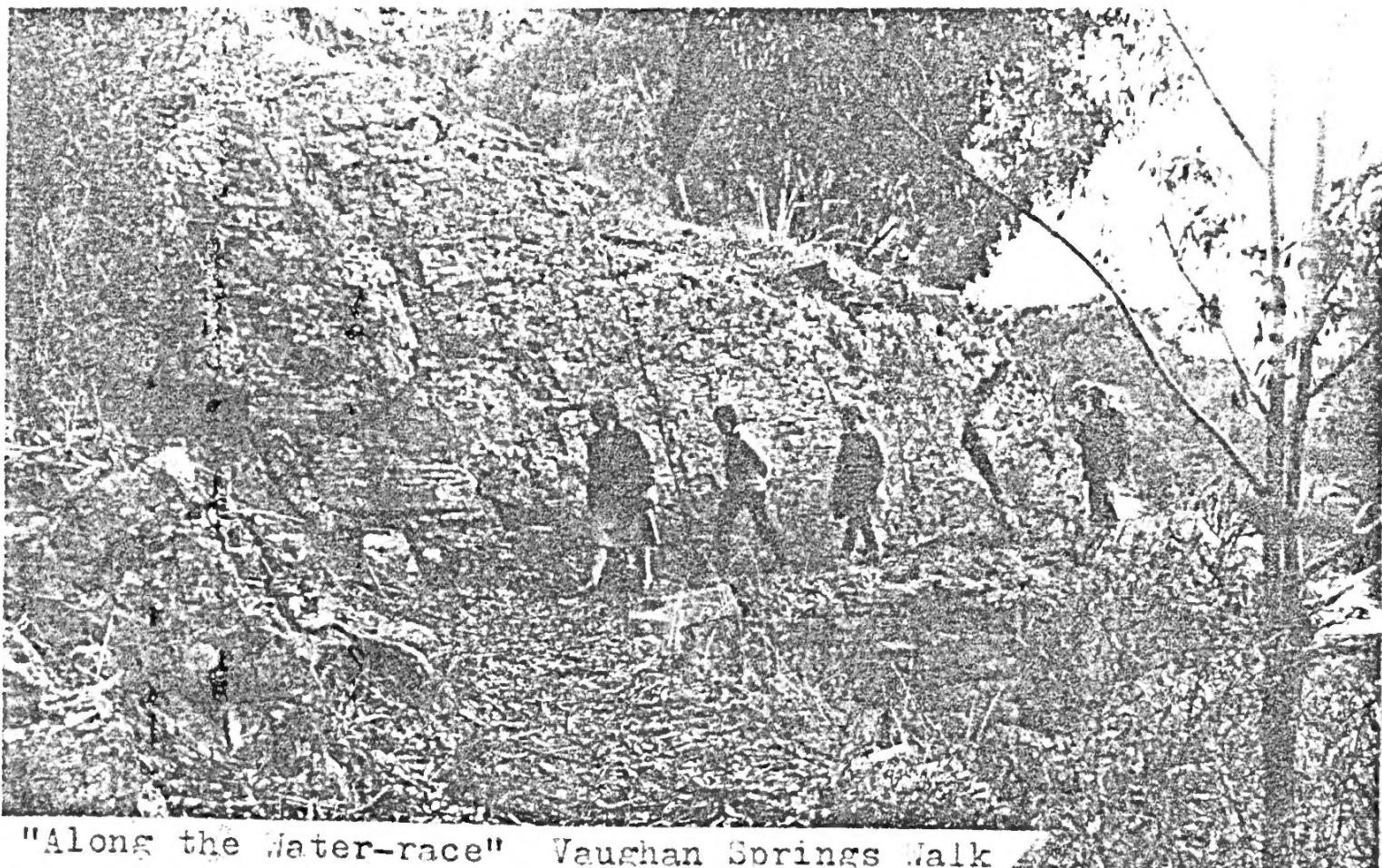


# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

September 1984



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"Along the Water-race" Vaughan Springs Walk  
Aug 11. Report - pages 4,5.

President: John Dare Ph. 76 4227

Secretary: Beri Perry Ph 73 4240

General meetings : at Castlemaine High School, Lawson Parade  
at 8 p.m., second Friday of the month.

Cutings: usually on the second Saturday of the month, leaving  
from the S.E.C. building, Hostyn St, at 1.30 p.m.

WTH THAT WAS AT CAMPBELLS CREEK

from Terry Collins

month for Wattles - apart from being one of the best ever it imparts a wonderful feeling that Winter is leaving - it is here. Rainfall also should insure a great display of flowers later on.

nest of Yellow Thornbills built in a Prickly Hakea near the base 5 feet from the ground but so well protected by the spines against cats. Two young were produced with both parents taking turns to feed them. Sadly now the parents have decided to take them away to the open world, depriving us of a lot of

nesting birds for about a week of a White-faced Honeyeater, but we also had Spinebills, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Silver-eyes. The two Plovers seem to have decided on an area of their nesting grounds perhaps they will breed.

SEED

*Chryanthemooides monilifera*

from Stan Bruton

urge of the bushland, from south-west Africa, which has spread relentlessly over the You-yangs and around the coast in this area, has established itself in Castlemaine.

A few years ago I pulled up several stunted but blossoming seedlings plants near the entrance to the new rubbish tip. Bushwalking up Diamond Gully last month, (July 28th), I found several healthy young plants, so as usual I pulled them up. Found small clumps of hundreds of seedlings, so I just pulled them all up, and I kept counting. When I had pulled up most of the noxious weeds the daylight had faded, but I resisted the urge to pull a few more scattered plants as homewards.

It's your turn to pull up a few, or a few hundred, while the ground is moist enough to make the job easy ?

QUEENSLANDS NATIONAL PARKS

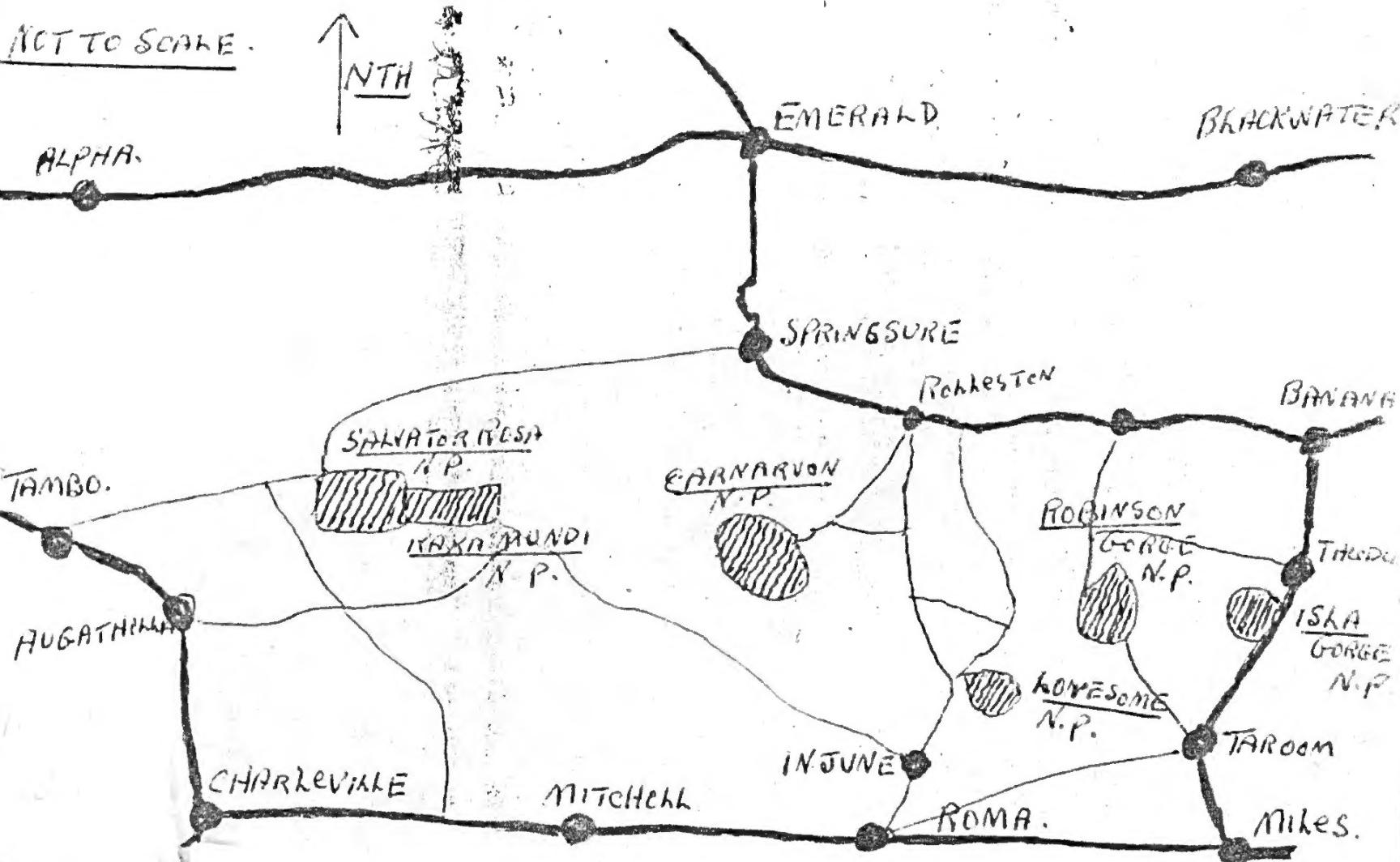
from Terry Collins

Many "Overlanders" from Victoria drive to Northern Queensland and back only to see all the resorts along the coast. In the down-to-earth nature lovers there are many wonderful

spots to visit if time permits. Some years ago as we made our way south towards home we stopped at a small town called Springs to fill up with gas & provisions. Talking to the young man that filled our gas bottle, he asked where we were headed, and then said, "Are you not calling in to see the sights of Carnarvon National Park? Please do go and be rewarded with what I call my Paradise".

Well we did and spent days and days of walking in his Paradise. Up the creek, crystal clear past tall "Euc.grandis" with their straight smooth pure white trunks, Spotted Gums, Red Bottle Brush Palms, and River Oaks. Further up the palms tend to be replaced with cycads and grass trees. Scattered all through are the Macrozamia, a palm-like plant up to about 3 m. high with their startling pine-apple-like growth which was feasted on by the Aborigines after a special preparation removed the poison. All kinds of wildlife are to be found and the sheer limestone cliffs with their various narrow gorges should please anyone. It is like a trip back in time.

Several years later we found out that we missed many other parks in that area and so that another traveller can benefit from our ignorance we include a sketch to show the area and their names.



THE TRANS - LODDON TREK 11th August (1984)

by Stan Bruton

It was a cold Saturday afternoon and rain appeared likely, so only 9 hardy (or does he mean foolhardy ? - Ed.) Field Naturalists crossed the river at Vaughan Springs, to explore the lovely area upstream we had discovered last year.

There were no wildflowers blooming yet, except those big, beautiful wattle trees, but it was a good day for the bird observers. The first bird listed was seen before we entered the park. As we entered Vaughan, I noticed the hawthorn trees were still covered with red berries. But on our right, near the bridge, they were bare. In a bare tree was a brilliant Crimson Rosella. Perhaps the parrots strip the fruit off the trees nearest their territory first.

As we crossed the Loddon, to climb up the steps to the old water race that is how such a fine scenic pathway, Berri pointed out two Spotted Pardalotes. They seemed oblivious to our presence. Perhaps they were preoccupied with choosing a spot in which to dig a nesting burrow.

There too, we saw the first of quite a few Grey Fantails. "Cranky Fans" they are called by some birdwatchers in Tasmania because of the seemingly purposeless and uncoordinated gyrations they so constantly perform.



"Which way do we go from here ?"



"Resting half-way up the rocky hill"

The cheerful and musical calls of Yellow-faced Honey-eaters dominated the area, but only the Yellow-tufted Honey-eater displayed his beauty from the top of a tall gum tree.

I crossed the river again, maybe a kilometer upstream, to inspect the now neglected Central Springs picnic spot, apparently seldom visited in this motorised age. The pipestand is pumpless, and some earlier flood has gauged a small hole in the concrete floor, into which water bubbles up. Thinking it would be mineral water I was about to sample it when I noticed a feathered object amongst the leaves and stones. I still do not know whether the water is mineral, nor how those three tiny birds and one equally tiny mammal came to be drowned in one little rock-pool.

The hillside there is criss-crossed with cart tracks, cut perhaps a century ago. Following one such track, past where a few shaped rocks and several fruit tree suckers indicate a riverside homestead generations ago, I found another log crossing and rejoined the other happy wanderers. I had only added to the bird list, Blackbird, Kookaburra and a small flock of Goldfinches.

As we began the return walk by climbing up a rocky hill to the grassy plateau above and beyond the old Chinaman's Garden, Frank Duffin pointed out two Wedge-tailed Eagles. By the time most of us reached the top they were away in the distance beyond Vaughan Spring.

To investigate the cicada-like bird calls from just over the

ridge, George and I went back that way a little. Some largish Honey-eater types flew into a grand old Yellow Box tree. Near the bush fence were three Eastern Rosellas; three black and white, aptly named Restless Flycatchers, creaking and squeaking, Yellow-rumped Thornbills probing the bark at a hollow tree, and several Welcome Swallows were swooping low to the grassland around us.

A lively lot they were too, but the sighting of the day was there beside us. Sitting quietly in the short grass, only 6 or 8 metres away was a beautiful dove-grey and rufous-buff Fantail Cuckoo. Unbelievably, only a metre or two from that were two wee Horsefield Bronze Cuckoos, busily pouncing on caterpillars, or perhaps grubs which had been washed to the surface by the recent heavy rains.

With the Pipits, Jacky Winters, Spurwings (Masked Lapwings), a nearby Magpie and a more distant Raven, that was a dozen different species seen in that one acre or so of farmland.

As we got back near the gully that Ray once told us had been sluiced for gold by both he and his father, another U.F.O flew over us, singing such a cheerful lilting song as it flew towards the bushland up the valley.

Back at the Springs park we added another five sightings - Yellow-faced, Spinebill, and Fuscous Honey-eaters, Yellow Robin and Superb Blue Fairywrens. Counting the Galahs, Corellas, Grey Shrike-thrushes, White-browed Scrub Wren, Red-browed Firetail Finch and White-naped Honeyeaters, that brought our bird list for the afternoon to 30 species.

### RED BACK SPIDERS

by Terry Collins

These belong to the family of Therid and have the name of *Latrodectus hasselti*. They are common to this district and seem to like to associate themselves in the garden or around sheds and woodheaps; so beware of those stacks of timber etc. behind your sheds. In fact the song about the Redback on the toilet seat is very true especially out back. Fortunately the Anti venene for these bites was discovered around 1950 and unless it is a serious bite then it is not especially dangerous.

The male is very much smaller than the female and is not a hazard as it is the female to be watched; and even the male Redback is as likely as not to become a meal for her ladyship. They build a very untidy web in all sorts of places and can be beneficial to a gardener as they have been found to live on insect pests such as cockroaches and earwigs. However too close to the house especially

if children are about is not advised but alone and away from habitation they form another cog in Nature.

Their relations in Europe and North America are called Black Widows.

W.V.F.N.C.A. Spring Camp-out 12/13/14 October 1984

In the Grampians National Park.

Based on 'Aginda' Camp, Dunkeld Road, Halls Gap.

Cost of accommodation and meals is \$27 per person per weekend.

Caravan Parks and motels available at Halls Gap, Approx. 1 km.

Activities include :-

Slide Illustrated talk on Grampians Flora

Bus tour to Aboriginal sites, cost \$5

Birdo outings

Wildflower and fern outings

Geology outing

More illustrated talks, Little Desert Bats and F.N.C. coach tours.

Enquiries to :-

Mrs Jean Hughes, Sec. Stawell F.N.C. 053 58 2031

Application form available if required. Book early.

Editorial Readers will note that we have moved into the computer era. Ern P. has computerised our program and you can see the result on the back page and below. Just in time too as you can see by a glance that there is much on during the next few months.

Visits to the bush around suggests that we are in for an interesting Spring judging by the leaves and buds which are appearing. So far my observations have included Greenhoods, Leopard orchids and the Blue Caladenia which we found last year, C.deformis.

Not much in the garden however if Blackbirds, Starlings, and Sparrows are not counted. We continue to have visits from Spinebills, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Blue Wrens, and of course, Wattle birds. I hope that spring blossoms will attract a greater variety.

Wednesday 31 October. Afternoon excursion to be arranged.

Saturday 3rd November Excursion to Muckleford. This is the F.N.C. contribution to the Festival Program, and our chance to show visitors our beautiful bushland. Meet at the Railway Station car park, Kennedy Street, at 1.30. Various leaders

Friday 9th November. Monthly meeting. Speaker is Mr Fred Rogers, who will speak on "The Little Desert". This will be part of the Festival Program.

Thursday 22nd November. Business meeting. 7.30 p.m.

Friday 14 December. Members and Visitors night. This is the final meeting for 1984. Bring a plate if possible.

## CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Friday 14 Sept. Monthly Meeting. Speaker is Mr Richard Dare, who will speak on "The layout of public gardens". Mr Dare recently won the Landscape Architects award for garden layouts in Knox. 8 p.m. at the High School.

Saturday 15 Sept. Excursion to Rise and Shine Mine, Clydesdale. Leader is J. Dare. Leave from S.E.C Mostyn St, at 1.30 p.m. Bring binoculars and plant books.

Wednesday 19 Sept. First of the 4.15 Wednesday excursions. Castlemaine North. Meet at the corner of Sawmill Road and Blakeleys Road at 4.15. Leader is S. Bruton. Bring your binoculars.

Wednesday 26 September. Evening excursion to Little Bendigo - birds and wildflowers. Meet opposite the Motel, on the Melbourne Road at 4.15. Leader is G. Broadway.

Thursday 27 Sept. Business meeting, K Turners, at 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 3rd October. Excursion to Clydesdale. Meet at Strangways (intersection of Guildford-Newstead Rd and Daylesford Rd) at 4.15. Leader is J. Dare.

Saturday 6 October. All day walk in Wattle Flat Forest. The all day walk is an annual event. This time a circular path through the bush to the N.W. of Castlemaine. Leave S.E.C. at 7.15 a.m.; park in private property. Bring lunch, camera, binoculars etc.

Saturday 6th-Sunday 7th October. Field Naturalists Club of Victoria Springtime get-together at Ringwood. See East Nat of Aug for details.

Wednesday 10 Oct. Afternoon excursion to N.E. Malimna - birds and wildflowers. Meet at the top of the hill past the High School on the Tourist Road (the right angle bend on the highest point) at 4.15. Leader is E. Perkins.

Friday 12, Sat 13 and Sun 14 Oct. Western Victoria Field Nats Clubs Association Campout at the Grampians. Location is "Aginda" camp. Details available from the Secretary.

Friday 12 Oct Monthly Meeting. Speaker is Mr J. Dare - topic is "Gardens of Tuscany". 8.00 p.m. at the High School.

Wednesday 17 Oct. Afternoon excursion to Guildford. Meet at Guildford Store at 4.15 p.m. Leader is B. Perry.

Sunday 21 October. Excursion to Maryborough Bushland. All day excursion, so take your lunch. Leave S.E.C. Mostyn Street at 10.15 sharp, or meet at Maryborough P.O. at 11.00 a.m. Leaders - Maryborough F.N.C.

Wednesday 24 October. Afternoon excursion. Time and place to be arranged.

Thursday 25 October. Business meeting 7.30 p.m..